

# Afghanistan

The Loya Jirga, the traditional Afghan Grand Assembly, will be

held in mid-June. This gathering is of utmost importance to the future

of Afghanistan, as transitional government leaders will be chosen. The transitional government will lead Afghanistan for the next 18-24 months. The new government will not only affect the Afghan people, but also the American people. If extremist leaders return to power, Afghanistan

could once again become the breeding grounds for terrorists.



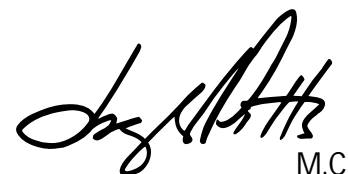
**Congressman Pitts with Afghanistan's interim leader Hamid Karzai.**



**For more on Afghanistan see:  
[www.house.gov/pitts/afghan.htm](http://www.house.gov/pitts/afghan.htm)**

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## Human Rights Update

Congressman Joe Pitts

June, 2002

## North Korea

Recently, readers may have seen the dramatic footage of the North Korean toddler who watched as her mother and others were arrested during their attempt to enter the Japanese consulate in Beijing to gain protection. More and more North Koreans are fleeing their country in hopes of finding a better life.

The current dictator Kim Jong Il continues the iron-fisted rule of his father Kim Il Sung. Prison and forced labor camps abound. The North Koreans suffer unimaginable atrocities at the hands of their government. Many North Koreans understandably attempt to flee the country, but some are captured. For women, especially those who have been trafficked in China as sex slaves or domestic servants, a return to North Korea is especially difficult.

The Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights and The Society to Help Returnees to North Korea print a quarterly booklet detailing the human rights violations against North Korean people. In one of their reports, they reveal that North Korean



**This malnourished North Korean boy, photographed by Dr. Norbert Vollertsen, represents the miserable existence imposed by the Communist government on most North Koreans.**

women who dyed their hair or wore earrings "would undergo painful punishment after they came back to North Korea. Their heads are pounded against the wall and their earrings are wrenched with pliers. The same treatment is given to women who wore eye makeup. Even after having gone through all of this the women would still run away after release

from the labor rehabilitation center. ... Those I've seen return from China ... from those labor rehabilitation centers are hard to recognize; their looks are changed from beating, starving, and forced labor."

One woman I met described the terrible torture she endured because she was honest and would not embezzle material goods for her boss. As a result, he falsely accused her of crimes; she was arrested, taken to a prison camp and routinely tortured to the point of losing consciousness. Then, the security officials would pour water on her face, revive her, and begin the torture process over again. She endured this for fourteen months. Then she was

sentenced to 13 years in a re-socialization camp with torture and forced labor.

Recently, I met with North Korean defector Yun Seong Su, former Major in the Ministry of National Security Defense of North Korea. The Major revealed that much of the food aid destined for the North Korean people does not get to them, but instead is used

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# India

Minority religious and ethnic groups raise increasing concerns about the abuses by Hindu extremist groups in India. In Gujarat, the militant Hindu group, VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad/ World Hindu Organization), has engaged in a deliberate campaign against Muslims and Christians. The VHP operates under the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh), a group reported to promote neo-fascist ideology. The ruling party in India, the BJP, falls under the control of the RSS. Unfortunately, the BJP has allowed the VHP and other extremist nationalist groups to attack religious and ethnic minorities with impunity. Some of these groups promote a neo-Nazi agenda as they attempt to make India a Hindu-only nation. The BBC reported in an expose' on extremist groups in India that

"Central to the RSS ideology has been the belief that real national unity and progress will come only when India is 'purged' of non-Hindus, or, when members of other communities subordinate themselves 'willingly' to 'Hindu superiority.'"

Compass Direct News service reports that a variety of pamphlets are distributed to promote hatred of minorities. One particular pamphlet was subtitled, "Let Bajrang Dal ready its crossbow: War is the only salvation." Other propaganda slogans state, "First butchers, then Christians." (The term "Butchers" refers to the Muslims who run the slaughterhouses and sell meat and cattle in India.)

The riots, which began earlier this spring, have taken over 2,000 lives, mostly from Muslim and

Christian communities. In addition to widespread destruction and murder, the extremists have worked to impose legislation limiting free speech, particularly religious speech. Further, they have forcibly "re-converted" non-Hindu people to Hinduism. Compass reports that over "16 tribal Christians were forced to re-convert to Hinduism on April 22 at a purification ceremony in Chopra village in the Malda district about 300 kilometers from Calcutta ... The conversions were in violation of the law on conversion that requires converts to file court affidavits affirming their consent to change their religion. Ironically, the VHP has been accusing Christians of violating this same law ... The converts at Chopra did not go through the process of filing affidavits. However, the VHP insists that they are exempt from these laws because when people convert to Hinduism it is not 'conversion' but 'homecoming.'"

Some of the tension results from Christian and other groups working with the Dalits (or untouchables) of India to help bring education and opportunities to escape from their terrible poverty. The caste system is deeply ingrained in India's culture, particularly in the extremist groups'



A humble Dalit home. Many Dalit's have faced the wrath of their countrymen for daring to convert from Hinduism to Christianity and Buddhism.

culture and vision of India, and powerful leaders aim to eliminate forces that might help bring freedom to the millions of Dalits.



India's Dalits are at the bottom of their country's traditional caste system, consigned to duties like removing feces and roadkill from roadways with their bare hands. Many are finding greater hope and opportunity in Christianity, while others have turned to Bhuddism. (Photo courtesy of AICC)

# North Korea

...Continued from page one to feed the ruling class and the military. The Major estimated that there were approximately 200,000 or more prisoners in the ten political prisoner camps across the nation. There is evidence that North Korea has sent military advisors to help with training in nations that support terrorism. And, Kim Il Sung, in June 1992, instructed that opium be grown in North Korea for sale to China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, and other nations. The regime also is manufacturing heroin for sale to other nations.

German doctor, Norbert Vollertson lived in North Korea serving the people there for 18 months, even giving

**For more about the plight of the Dalits, go to [www.aiccindia.org](http://www.aiccindia.org)**

some of his own skin to be grafted onto a burn victim. Because of his sacrifice, the North Korean government awarded him a Friendship Medal and allowed him widespread access to the country. His stories of the people's suffering and the photos of starving children and adults are deeply moving. Most striking was a statement by Dr. Vollertson that should spur our nation and the international community to action. When comparing the North Korean prison camps to Nazi concentration camps, Dr. Vollertson said, "No journalists, nobody wanted to believe that Hitler is so cruel, that the German government is so cruel. ... I think it's my duty as a German to learn from history, to not make the same mistake twice." It is vital that we not ignore the plight of thousands of people in North Korea who are starving, enduring beatings and other torture in terrible prison camps, and are slowly being destroyed by their own government.

**For more information on North Korea, go to: [www.nkhumanrights.or.kr](http://www.nkhumanrights.or.kr)**

**Letters of concern asking President Bush to help the people of North Korea, particularly refugees in China, can be directed to: President George W. Bush The White House Washington, DC 20500**

## Congressman Pitts' Annual Human Rights Conference

**Calvary Church  
1051 Landis Valley Road  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania  
Saturday, June 15  
8:30 A.M. to Noon  
Call 202-225-2411 for more information**

